

A STUDY OF THE THEME "ALTERNANCE" AS SEEN IN THE  
MAIN CHARACTERS OF SEVEN PLAYS

BY HENRI DE MONTHERLANT

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## INTRODUCTION

Henry de Montherlant was born in 1896 in Paris. He was an only child and was born in the Aristocracy. The playwright was raised by his sickly mother. He seemed to have a need to prove himself, a fact believed to be the reason for his shy, unpredictable behavior. Montherlant began writing at age 10 and Milton Stansbury believes that his immaturity is the reason for his manner of writing, because he says: "Post-war literature was rejuvenated by Montherlant's incredibly naive mind."<sup>1</sup>

Montherlant attended a Catholic school and held membership in the Knights of the Order of Malta. At the age of 14, he developed an interest in bullfighting and fought until injured in 1925. He also loved football.

The playwright enlisted in the Infantry in 1916 and was wounded in 1918. He used his war experiences for subject matter for his first works which include L'Exil.

In 1925, Montherlant lost both his parents and

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<sup>1</sup>Milton Stansbury, French Novelists of Today (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Press, 1935); p. 157.

grandparents. He then sold the family house and traveled for ten years. During this time he wrote most of his novels.

In 1940, he was wounded spiritually by the defeat of France and after that time he began writing plays.

A list of Montherlant's theatrical works include:

L'Exil(1914), Pasiphaé(1928), La Reine Morte(1942), Le Port-Royal(1942), Fils de Personne(1943), Un Incompris(1943), Malatesta(1944), Le Maître de Santiago(1945), Demain, il fera jour(1946), Celles qu'on prend dans ses bras(1949), La Ville dont le prince est un enfant(1951).

The playwright's plays are characterized by the following points: (1) They are psychological. Each of the main characters does a lot of soul-searching. (2) He uses leitmotifs. None of the main characters repeats the same sentence in a play. (3) Water is used as a recurring image. The characters speak of flowing emotions. (4) Language is noble, rhetorical and consciously stylized. The main characters usually speak in a manner that reflects the aristocracy to which most of them belong. (5) Skepticism and world weariness occur among his heroes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>John Fletcher, Forces in Modern French Drama (Great Britain: University of London, 1972), pp. 68-77.

Montherlant died on September 2, 1972, but as Jacques Bersani says: "Depuis la fin de la guerre le théâtre est dominé par deux oeuvres importantes et variées celles de Montherlant et celles d'Anouilh."<sup>3</sup>

The writer uses the word alternance in this paper to describe the duplicity of the characters' behavior. They act in a certain manner to give the audience one impression of them when in reality they feel opposite emotions from those they try to display.

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<sup>3</sup>Jacques Bersani, La Littérature en France depuis 1945 (Paris: Bordas Press, 1970), p. 345.

## CHAPTER I

### ALTERNANCE IN THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF

#### L'EXIL AND LA REINE MORTE

L'Exil, Montherlant's first play, was written in 1914. The play uses Mrs. Presles's salon in Paris as its setting. The central characters are Philippe, his mother Geneviève and his friend Sénac. The play is about World War I and Philippe's reaction to it and life in general.

Philippe is the character in this play in whose behavior alternance is most visible. During a conversation with his mother, Philippe begs for her permission to enlist in the army. Geneviève says repeatedly that she does not want him to leave her but Philippe replies, "Vous me défendez de m'engager quand mon pays est en péril?" (I,iv) Seemingly, Philippe is very patriotic and wants to help his country in any possible way.

Yet, in the second act, Geneviève encourages Philippe to enlist but he has a completely different attitude. He does not want to go. Speaking of the war, he says, "J'y crois autant qu'on peut croire à quelque chose." (II,viii)

This is a cynical remark, obviously in opposition to the preceding quote. In the first act, Sénac is in the service but in the second act he is on his way home, a fact suggesting that Philippe only wanted to enlist because Sénac had. Genevieve says this to Philippe:

Mon vieux, voilà un mois que les Allemands sont en France. Qu'est-ce que tu as fait? Tu as joué au tennis et tu as fait des vers patriotiques. Là-dessus, Sénac s'engage, et tu veux le suivre comme un petit chien. (I,v)

John Chiari says: "Montherlant is always after emotions."<sup>4</sup>

Philippe is anarchistic and hypocritical. This is another side of his behavior. The majority of his behavior is of a cynical or anti-social nature. He and one of his mother's friends are talking and before the lady is able to complete her statement, he interrupts her by saying:

Pardon, sans doute je ne crois pas à la fidélité, qui n'est qu'une hésitation de psychologie mais, je suis sûr que la reconnaissance existe. Par exemple, on a souvent de la reconnaissance aux gens pour les conseils qu'ils ne vous ont pas donnés. (II,iv)

If Philippe were not anarchistic and hypocritical, he would not have talked to a friend in this manner. One usually makes small talk with friends and/or guests. Other

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<sup>4</sup>John Chiari, The Contemporary French Theater (New York: Gordian Press, 1970), p. 212.

elements of cynicism are interrupting a speaker in the middle of a sentence, deliberately not speaking on entering a room and forcing one's opinion on everyone while discussing a particular issue.

This young man's most striking personality trait is his indifference. While talking to his mother and S  nac, he says, "Moi, mourir, je m'en fiche! (I,iv) Yet, he has questioned them about the people who return from the war and the large number of men who do not make it back. If he were indifferent to war and life in general he would not have asked these questions. When a man enlists he knows that there is a possibility of losing his life and it does not matter, but Philippe is concerned and does not want to die.

Montherlant allows Genevi  ve to describe the alternance in Philippe's behavior. She asks him, "Comment peux-tu   tre    la fois cynique, immoral, anti-social, et puis vouloir t'engager, et puis crier: Mourir, je m'en fiche! comme tu faisais il y a six mois?" (II,viii) Michel Mohrt responds this way in regard to Philippe: "L'h  roisme et l'asc  tisme de guerre deviennent la gravit   et l'asc  tisme de l'ecrivain dans son oeuvre."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Michel Mohrt, Montherlant "l'homme libre" (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1943), p. 229.



Philippe, like all of Montherlant's characters, has alternant behavior. In other words, he has two faces. His real face is one of a young man who wants to be loved and accepted. He does not want to be exiled always by the things and people who mean the most to him. Speaking to his mother, he says:

...Mais non, l'exil, toujours l'exil! Hier, au collège, je me mêlais, et c'est pourquoi j'y ai été si heureux. Et puis le collège qui m'exile, pour je ne sais quelle bêtise, quand j'avais fait de lui ma chose et mon amour. Et puis la guerre, et exilé de tout ce pour quoi je suis fait tantôt par ma faute, à cause de ce que je suis, tantôt par la faute des autres. (II,viii)

Philippe, however, does not want anyone other than his mother to see this face. Therefore, he shows everyone else the other face which is one of a man who does not care about anything.

Geneviève's character can also be analyzed using the theme of alternance. In the first act, she is opposed to Philippe's joining the army. She is persistent and consistent in this attitude and makes sure that everyone is aware of her feelings. Speaking of the war, she says, "Naturellement, si tu obstines...Tu l'as dit, je ne peux pas t'en fermer à clef dans ta chambre. Oh! tu finiras par obtenir ce que tu veux. Ce n'est pas difficile quand le seul obstacle est une personne qui ne compte pas pour toi." (I, iv)

After considerable discussion about the war and what seem to be heroic acts by other enlistees, Geneviève encourages Philippe to enlist for a position that will not require combat, obviously out of fear for his safety. She says, "...Eh bien! engage-toi comme civil par exemple dans les ambulances de l'Y.M.C.A.... Tu seras dans la zone des armées, peut-être l'occasion te sera-t-elle donnée, de te mettre en valeur sans risquer ta vie d'une insensée..."

(II,viii) No matter what excuse Geneviève gives, her attitude in the second act is in opposition to her attitude in the first act.

Jacques Guicharnaud remarks, in regard to Genevieve and her behavior:

For Montherlant, man is essentially a psychological mechanism whose workings do not follow a logical development. He is made up of contradictions; he surprises others and surprises himself. And the objective of theater is to bring out the working of the mechanism by means of exemplary anecdotes.<sup>6</sup>

Montherlant has allowed two characters in this play to display alternant behavior, Genevieve and Philippe.

La Reine Morte, Montherlant's most popular play was written in 1942. The three-act play uses King Ferrante's

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<sup>6</sup>Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theater from Giraudoux to Beckett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 99.

palace in Portugal as its setting. The central characters are Ferrante, his son Pedro, Pedro's wife Inès, Ferrante's confidant Coelho and the Princess of Navarre. The play is about a dying king who is concerned about the future of the kingdom after his death.

Ferrante is the main character and he is also the one in whom alternance is most visible. He is presented to us as a man who loves his country and wants to protect its reputation at any cost. To accomplish this goal he wants his son to marry the Princess of Navarre, not knowing that he has secretly married Doña Inès. Speaking to Pedro, Ferrante says, "Je veux que vous épousiez l'Infante. Elle est le fils que j'aurais dû avoir. À votre sens l'État marche toujours assez bien, quand il vous donne licence de faire tout ce que vous voulez, gouverner vous est odieux." (I,ii)

This statement reveals alternance in Ferrante's behavior. Seemingly, he is concerned about his country, which is typical of a good king. A king should love his country and want the most competent person to succeed him. It is very cruel for a father to tell his son that the latter is not of leadership quality, especially if the father is a king, because sons usually imitate their fathers. Therefore, when Ferrante tells Pedro that the Princess is

more capable of ruling than he, it is an insult to his character. Being cruel is in opposition to being good. Robert B. Johnson explained Ferrante this way: "The Montherlantian hero displays the gamut of human traits both good and bad."<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the play these two behavior patterns are visible. In the second act, Ferrante and Coelho discuss Inès, and Coelho wants her death, indeed, he is very persistent about it! Ferrante says:

Quoi, la faire mourir! Quel excès incroyable! Si je tue quelqu'un pour avoir aimé mon fils, que ferais-je donc à qui l'aurait haï? Elle a rendu amour pour amour, elle l'a fait avec mon consentement. L'amour payé par la mort! Il y aurait grande injustice. (II,i)

Here Ferrante is showing signs of goodness. He does not want to destroy the girl that his son loves.

In the third act, Ferrante's attitude changes completely after he finds out that Inès is pregnant. Ordering her death is probably the cruelest act of his life. However, Ferrante wants us to believe that from his point of view, killing Inès is not an act of cruelty but an obligatory act for the good of the kingdom. Obviously, it is all right for Inès and Pedro to be in love as long as they are able

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<sup>7</sup>Robert B. Johnson, Henry de Montherlant (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc. 1968), p. 89.

to keep it a secret. A baby would reveal to everyone that the king's son was involved with a commoner and that would be damaging to the kingdom's prestige. Ferrante cannot allow this type of scandal to take place.

After pondering over the situation, Ferrante is not sure that he has made the right decision and he talks to himself: "Pourquoi est-ce que je la tue, acte inutile, acte funeste. Mais ma volonté m'aspire, et je commets la faute, sachant que c'en est une. Un remords vaut mieux qu'une hésitation qui se prolonge." (III,vi) "Montherlant préfère subsister autour des plus grandes figures un halo d'incertitude, un charme de contradiction," remarks Pierre Simon.<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes Ferrante is good and sometimes he is bad or cruel, an inconstancy revealing alternant behavior. In this play Dino Moro describes Ferrante's actions this way: "Les lucioles lui ressemblent: lumineuses et obscures, obscures et lumineuses." (III,iii) "Each of the plays creates at least one unforgettable character of major stature," says Jonathan Griffin.<sup>9</sup> In this play, Montherlant

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<sup>8</sup>Pierre Simon, Théâtre et Destin (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1959), p. 109.

<sup>9</sup>Jonathan Griffin, The Master of Santiago and Four Other Plays (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. v.

is unforgettable because he has the power of life and death in his hands.

Ferrante, like all of Montherlant's main characters, has two faces. He is really the one who is pre-occupied with the fear of dying and nothing else matters to him. By his own admission, he has lost interest in his son. Yet, most of the time he shows us the face of a man who is only considering the good of his country.

## CHAPTER II

### ALTERNANCE IN THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF MALATESTA

#### AND LE MAÎTRE DE SANTIAGO

Malatesta, a four-act play written in 1943-44, uses Rimini as its setting. The central characters are Malatesta, his wife Isotta, Pope Paul II and Malatesta's biographer Porcellio. The play is about a sadistic king and the manner in which he rules his country.

The first act introduces Malatesta as a man who has committed varied evil sex acts. He tells Porcellio how he seduced a page and the biographer says: "Quel sauvage! Et remarquez qu'il avait une sorte d'amitié pour ce Sacramoro. Cela nous donne une idée de ce qui nous attend, le jour ou l'humeur lui viendra de plaisanter avec nous."

(I, iv) From this remark, it is obvious that the biographer is afraid of his master. This fear keeps him worrying, never knowing when the king may turn against him. However, Malatesta is clever enough to keep Porcellio under his control.

Malatesta has also committed many sinful acts

against the church. The Pope is aware of these things and tells him:

Vous me dites que vous avez notre sainte Église dans les veines. Cela, c'est le style de votre défense devant le tribunal ecclésiastique: pas avec moi, je vous prie. Puis-je oublier que vous aviez quinze ans quand vous avez combattu, et même défait les troupes du Saint-Vierge?" (II,v)

The Pope is telling Malatesta that he does not trust him and that he can see through his clever pretenses. The king responds this way:

Votre Sainteté ne me reproche que des faits anciens pour lesquels j'ai été sans doute condamné, mais dont j'ai été lavé par la suite, puisque de cette fameuse sentence aucune parti n'a reçu exécution et puisque c'est finalement la Rose d'or qui a fleuri de mon bucher. (En mars 1462, Pie II me donnait sa bénédiction solennelle tandis que je partais pour la Morée. Voltes salutaires disons-le en passant. (II,v)

By saying this Malatesta is admitting to the Pope that he has been wicked and that he has been good enough to avoid punishment for his crimes.

The first two acts show how clever Malatesta is, but in the third act we find that he is not always clever. The Pope has imprisoned him; and explains his actions this way: "...j'ai donné à mon assassin un emploi très honorable, que beaucoup ambitionnent et qu'il a d'ailleurs agréé sans contrainte aucune." (III,v) The Pope is trying to convince her that he has done Malatesta a favor by keeping him in the Vatican but the truth is he has tricked him with



this lie. The Pope wants to punish Malatesta for wrong doings. Montherlant l'a d'ailleurs codifiée en exprimant par l'alternance, son désir de ne point choisir, de ne point renoncer.<sup>11</sup>

In the fourth act Malatesta is back in Rimini after his wife has begged the Pope for his temporary freedom. The Pope outwits Malatesta again because he and Isotta must leave all of their valuables in Rome for security, the Pope wants to be sure that the king will return.

Malatesta is fooled again and this time it is fatal. He comes home and continues his sadistic ways by seducing a thirteen-year old girl, rekindling Porcellio's fear and hatred revealed in the first act. This fear causes him to poison Malatesta, but if Malatesta had not trusted Porcellio to prepare the drink for him, he would never have been poisoned. The poison was placed in the drink.

The alternance in Malatesta's behavior is now evident. In the beginning, he was very clever and got what he wanted, but in the end, he was very foolish and this foolishness caused his death. Malatesta has two faces. He shows the audience his cruel and sadistic side, yet in pri-

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<sup>11</sup>Pierre Sipriot, Montherlant, par lui-même (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1953), p. 5.

vate he shudders at the thought of the acts he commits.

"The plays of Montherlant are original and in striking contrast to the narrow horizons of the spirit of the age, for they are concerned with external problems of the human soul which present the sweep of human aspirations and reveal the dignity of the inner man."<sup>12</sup>

Le Maître de Santiago, a three-act play was written in 1945, using don Alvaro's home in Avila as its setting. The central characters are Alvaro, Marianne and Bernal. The play is about the Master of Santiago and his philosophies of life.

In scene one, we discover how religious Alvaro is.

Tia, Marianne's governess, tells her the following story:

Il y a un mois, un pauvre gentilhomme, inconnu de votre père, se présente chez lui, pour lui demander son aide dans la recherche d'un emploi. Quand il est parti don Alvaro s'aperçoit qu'une des salières d'argent qui étaient sur la desserte a disparu. Quelques jours plus tard, le gentilhomme revient, et votre père remarque qu'il a des chaussures neuves, au lieu des chaussures usées et rapiécées qu'il portait la fois précédente. Alors, il va prendre les deux salières qui restaient, les enveloppe, et les lui donne en lui disant: Je n'ai pu vous trouver de travail, mais, s'il vous plaît, emportez ceci, pour l'amour de Dieu, et priez pour moi. Le gentilhomme en pleurant, lui baise les mains et avoue sa faute. (I,i)

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<sup>12</sup>Frederick Lumley, Trends in Twentieth-Century Drama (New Jersey: Essential Books Incorporated, 1956), p. 355.

Alvaro has to be clever to think of this way to handle the situation and he is showing that he cares. Caring is an attribute of God. Therefore, Alvaro is behaving as a Christian.

Patriotism is another of Alvaro's good points. Speaking of Spain, he says: "La gloire d'Espagne a été reduite à un envahisseur dont la présence insultait sa foi, son esprit, ses coutumes." (I,iv) Patriotism is representative of Christianity because Christians are taught to love, and such devotion can include the love of one's country.

Alvaro believes that whatever happens is the will of God. This is a typical Christian reaction because Christians usually put all of their faith in God. Talking to some knights, he says, "Si j'avais eu jamais quelque renommée, je dirais d'elle ce que nous disons de nos morts: Dieu me l'a donnée. Dieu me l'a reprise. Que sa volonté soit faite. Je n'ai soif que d'un immense retirement." (I,iv)

Contrary to typical Christian behavior, Alvaro constantly speaks against youth. Once he says, "Les jeunes gens n'ont l'audace de rien, ni le respect de rien, ni l'intelligence de rien." (I,v) This behavior is contrary because Alvaro is discriminating against youth, and Christians

usually love and respect everyone until they are given valid reason to act otherwise.

During a conversation between Alvaro and Bernal we learn that Alvaro does not believe in natural feelings. He says: "J'aime l'Espagne en proportion de ses mérites, exactement comme je ferais pour un pays étranger. De même, que Marianne soit ma fille ne me rendra jamais exagéré en sa faveur." (II,ii) This quote shows that Alvaro is not charitable with feelings and it is most unusual for a father, particularly a Christian, to distribute feelings according to merit. Feelings should come naturally. Alvaro's character and his dilemma of being caught between a desire for commitment and a nihilistic mind are always present.<sup>13</sup>

The conversation between Bernal and Alvaro continues:

Bernal: Et jamais l'idée ne vous est venue de les placer pour la dot de Marianne? Non, cela, ce n'eût été qu'un mouvement naturel. Vous, il fallait la charité. Ne pas donner à de pauvres idiots qui vous haïssent de leur avoir donné!

Alvaro: La charité n'a de sens que si elle est payée de cette haine.

Bernal: Ah, vous me faites vomir, la charité!

Alvaro: Et vous, vous me faites vomir, les mouvements que vous appelez naturels. La charité m'est comptée devant Dieu de thésauriser pour mes

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<sup>13</sup>Gaëtan Picon, Contemporary French Literature (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1974), p. 166.

héritiers qui après tout n'ont pas besoin d'être plus riches que je ne le fus? Si j'étais mort il y a cinquante ans mes biens seraient revenus à l'Ordre; alors c'était la règle. Il n'a de famille que par l'élection et l'esprit, la famille par le sang est maudite. Nous, de l'Ordre, nous sommes une famille... (II,ii)

"Montherlant sees with rather vain but frightening candor that opposing emotions, thoughts, and actions form the only consistency of man."<sup>14</sup> Opposing actions are what Alvaro shows. On the one hand, he is a perfect Christian, but on the other hand, he is not charitable. It is impossible to be an uncharitable Christian, therefore, Alvaro has two faces or alternant behavior.

The behavior of the main characters in Le Maître de Santiago and Malatesta are in alternance to each other. Malatesta is basically an evil man and Alvaro is basically a decent man.

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<sup>14</sup>Robert W. Corrigan, Masterpieces of the Modern French Theater (New York: Collier Books, 1967), p. 45.

### CHAPTER III

ALTERNANCE IN THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF FILS DE PERSONNE,  
DEMAIN, IL FERA JOUR, AND LA VILLE DONT LE  
PRINCE EST UN ENFANT

Fils de Personne, a four-act play was written in 1943, and Demain, il fera jour, a three-act play, was written in 1948. The central characters are George, Gillou and Marie. The plays are about a father and his feelings for his illegitimate son.

In this instance, Montherlant uses two plays or more specifically a play and its sequel, to show the alternance in George's behavior. He is shown to be a loving father in Fils de Personne. Talking to Gillou, he says:

Hélas, le sérieux n'est pas là. Moi, je voudrais que tu aies les cheveux en chien fou et que tu sois sérieux. Mais tout ce qui est sérieux te fait bâiller, comme il y a certains hommes, tout ce qui est tendre les fait rire. Quand on explique quelque chose à une femme, même si elle ne comprend pas, elle écoute, elle trouve une réponse. Toi, tu tournes la tête, et tu parles d'autre chose. Tu as une façon de volatiser tout un peu profond que je te dis, de le rendre inexistant, soit en répondant à côté. Et nous retombons toujours au silence, et à l'attente de ton bâillement, ou à tes petites inepties. Et tout meurt ainsi, faute de prise sur toi. Et pourtant, et pourtant..., j'aurais voulu faire de toi un homme. (II,iv)

George has set high standards for his son. He does not want Gillou to smoke or read comic books or slouch at the table. Gillou cannot reach the high standards that his father has set for him and he says to George: "Qu'est-ce que tu veux, je suis comme je suis!" (III,i)

In the fourth act, George sends Gillou to Le Havre with his mother. George feels that Gillou will never be the perfect, well-mannered young man that he wants him to become and he also feels that Gillou is more interested in his mother than him. He explains his actions this way: "Moi, je t'immolais à quelque chose de haut et pur." (IV,ii) "Montherlant's style is characterized by strong imagery and by strictly logical word order."<sup>15</sup>

George is so disappointed in Gillou in the first act of Demain, il fera jour that he tells Marie: "Je ne l'aime pas." (I,i) However, this is not the truth because George refuses to allow his son to enlist in the Resistance. If George did not love Gillou, he would not care whether he enlisted or not.

At the end of the act, George receives a letter accusing him of being a collaborator. He immediately

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<sup>15</sup> Helmut Hatzfeld, Trends and Styles in Twentieth-Century Literature (Washington Press: The Catholic University of America, 1957), p. 40.

changes his mind about allowing Gillou to enlist. George justifies his decision this way:

Je fais appel à ton sens, à ton jugement, à ton esprit de mesure. Ces qualités sont toujours rares, et surtout chez les jeunes gens. Elles sont rares plus que jamais aujourd'hui. Quand tout le monde est déséquilibré, c'est être raisonnable qui est à t'autoriser à faire quelque chose dans la Résistance, à condition que tu le fasses avec prudence, et sans risques exagérés. (II,iii)

Gillou has gone to his first day's battle and George is filled with remorse and guilt. He says to Marie:

Est-ce que la nature humaine, quand on la voit en soi, ne peut pas vous causer une horreur telle qu'on veuille en mourir? Mourir, pour cesser de se connaître. Mais non, soi, on ne meurt pas. Les vieux s'en tirent toujours; ce sont les fils qui paient pour eux. Trente ans d'égarements du père sont punis dans une heure d'égarements du fils... (III)

Marie finally realizes what George has done and naturally she is very upset because George has caused the death of her only child. She says to him: "Lâche, quand tu l'as abandonné à sa naissance. Lâche, quand tu l'as abandonné à Cannes. Lâche et hideux quand tu viens de le tuer, pour te sauver toi-même." (III)

The alternance in George's behavior is now evident. In the play, Fils de Personne, he gives Gillou up because he is not of the quality that he wants in a son. However, in the play, Demain, il fera jour, George gives Gillou up to save his own life. "Montherlant's plays are great debates



variously loose and tight in construction and great challenges."<sup>16</sup>

La Ville dont le prince est un enfant was written in 1951. This three-act play uses a Catholic school as its setting. The central characters are Sevrais, Soubrier and the abbot of Pradts. The play is about the unusual friendship of two of the school's students and one of their instructors.

Sevrais is the character in whose behavior alternance is most visible. He is presented to us as a young man who has a special association with Soubrier. The latter is also a student in this school. In regard to this friendship, the abbot says to Soubrier: "Alors, je ne veux plus de cette association entre vous et Sevrais. Les amitiés sont absolument interdites entre élèves de divisions différentes." (I, i)

Later, as the conversation progresses, the abbot says to Soubrier: "Je ne sais...Eh bien, mon ami, je vous avertis que maintenant ce petit jeu en est à sa fin et que nous allons vous tenir court. Tout le monde vient se

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<sup>16</sup>Barry Ulanov, Makers of the Modern Theater (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 520.

plaindre de vous: les professeurs, les surveillants, vos parents..." (I,i) This statement shows that the abbot knows that Soubrier is the cause of the continuing relationship between him and Sevrais. Yet, he accuses Sevrais of being the aggressor in their relationship. Sevrais responds this way to the accusation: "Si vous trouvez que mon influence sur lui n'est pas bonne, si je suis la pierre sur laquelle il achoppe, dites-le-moi, et je suis prêt à rompre avec lui..." (I,iii) Sevrais is willing to do whatever is necessary to help his friend.

Justin O'Brien says, "Montherlant had the antennae of a masterwriter and that is why his style is not dated like that of authors who adopt a fake-peasant or a fake-popular speech."<sup>17</sup>

Soubrier does not want to give up his friendship with Sevrais and accuses him of feeling the same way. In regard to this, Soubrier tells Sevrais: "Tu prétends que tu avais sur moi une mauvaise influence, et tu veux changer. Mais tu me pousse à venir à la reserres pendant l'étude, en racontant une blague à Prial..." (I,v)

Sevrais says continuously that he is only interested

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<sup>17</sup>Justin O'Brien, The French Literary Horizon (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 219.

in Soubrier and that he can face intimidation if it helps Soubrier. Speaking to his friend, Sevrais says: "Et moi, je fais aussi le serment que jamais, dans mes relations avec toi, je chercherai mon intérêt: seulement le tien c'était la devise des Templiers." (II,iv)

Sevrais's determination to help his friend costs him his pride, his privacy and finally it costs him his dismissal from school. When he is informed of his dismissal, Sevrais's response is:

Alors, je suis chassé! Chassé sur-le-champ comme un domestique qui a volé une montre, on ne me donne même pas mes huit jours, on ne peut supporter ma présence une heure de plus, elle sait le collège. Et on n'a même pas le courage de me le dire en face, on me le fait dire par un surveillant." (III,iii)

Throughout the play, Sevrais talks about what he is willing to do for Soubrier. The former is doing all that he can do for Soubrier and although most people consider doing for others at the expense of themselves a hardship, Sevrais enjoys it. Therefore, he is showing alternating behavior.

Soubrier's behavior can be analyzed using the theme of alternance also. He presents an innocent, apologetic face to the abbot as he presents a face of a person who is capable of committing various wrongs to others. This is

what the abbot says to Soubrier in regard to what is being said about him:

Je ne sais...(Comme revenant à lui.) Eh bien, mon ami, je vous avertis que maintenant ce petit jeu en est à sa fin, et que nous allons vous tenir court. Tout le monde vient se plaindre de vous: les professeurs, les surveillants, vos parents. Des parents sont venus me dire: (D'où sort-il, celui-là?) Votre père m'a dit: (Mon pire ennemi ne me causerait pas plus d'embêtements que mon fils.) Il pleurerait presque. Et je suis là, moi seul, à essayer de vous soutenir contre eux tous, et contre vous. Et un an, vous avez été à deux reprises sur la liste des élèves à renvoyer, et deux fois j'ai obtenu de M. le Supérieur que votre nom fût effacé. Je me rends presque ridicule, à force d'intervenir sans cesse pour vous auprès de celui-ci et celui-là. Seulement, on soutient, on soutient, et puis une heure vient où, soi aussi...Vous écoutez ce que je vous dis? (I,i)

Soubrier also takes advantage of Sevrais. Knowing that the latter loves to do for others and Soubrier constantly tells him how much he is needed and Sevrais does whatever he can to aid his friend.

Montherlant allows the abbot to describe the alternance in Soubrier's behavior as he says to him: "Non, je n'ai pas parlé de cela. Allons, relevez la tête! Toujours vos deux visages: le visage vivant, joyeux, hilare que vous avez avec vos camarades. Et votre autre visage, celui que vous avez avec moi..." (I,i)

The characterization in the plays, Fils de Personne, Demain, il fera jour and La Ville dont le prince est un enfant is similar. There is a father in the first two

plays and an abbot in the third play. They both give advice and show concern for the child for whom they care. George is attracted to Gillou and the abbot is interested in Soubrier.

## CONCLUSION

Philippe, Geneviève, Ferrante, Malatesta, Alvaro, George, Sevrais and Soubrier all have changing behavioral patterns. Philippe shows us a young man who cares nothing about life, but the real Philippe is a young man who is very sensitive and displays indifference to hide his desire to be accepted.

Geneviève does not want Philippe to enlist at the beginning of the play. At this point, she is only thinking of her son's safety. However, following consistent and considerable discussion with her friends, she changes her mind and wants Philippe to enlist because they convince her that it is heroic to enlist in the army.

Ferrante is sometimes good and sometimes cruel. An example of his goodness is shown when he pleads for the life of the girl who loves his son. An example of his cruelty is shown when he orders the death of that same girl because she is pregnant.

Malatesta is shown to be cruel and smart in the beginning of the play. For instance, he tells the Pope how he committed various evil acts against the Church and

escaped punishment through his intelligence. However, at the end of the play, he is shown to be a fool when he is poisoned by his trusted servant.

Alvaro prays often, he believes that whatever happens is the will of God and he has no interest in money, but he does not believe in the true meaning of charity.

George gives his son up twice. The first time, he gives him up because the son is not manly enough for him. George believes that a man should meet certain standards. The second time, George gives Gillou up because his own life is threatened and he wants to save himself.

Sevrais constantly disregards himself and willingly suffers for Soubrier. The former is even expelled from school because he continues a relationship with the latter after he has been asked to terminate that friendship.

Soubrier presents an innocent, apologetic face to the abbot and to the audience, yet, he shows everyone else the face of a shrewd, selfish young man.

The main characters in each of the seven plays show different facets of the playwright, Montherlant. Each of them was a soul-searcher. The playwright, for ten years after the death of his parents and grandparents, did much self-evaluation. None of the main characters is poor and neither was Montherlant, for he was a proud member of the

aristocracy. Montherlant was a Catholic, and all of his main characters are also Catholics. The playwright was a military man and so are two of his main characters.

The conclusion is that Montherlant uses the theme of alternance to show how varying situations produce interchangeable behavior, and he incorporates into each main character an emotion and/or activity that he felt or experienced during his lifetime.



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